

"Standardization + Privacy = Everyone Wins"

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Law enforcement agencies across the U.S. receive thousands of reports a day on suspicious activity. But how do these agencies determine what information is related to terrorism, or for that matter, even related to a crime? More importantly, how do we identify the critical pieces of information in a way that protects the privacy, civil rights and civil liberties of individuals?

The Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative (NSI) has created a common approach for gathering, documenting, processing, analyzing, and sharing information about terrorism-related suspicious activities. This process is a behaviors based approach, where a SAR is only documented when the ?observed behaviors [are] reasonably indicative of preoperational planning related to terrorism or other criminal activity.? This helps mitigate the risk of profiling based on race, ethnicity, national origin, or religious affiliation or activity.

A critical element of the NSI is the protection of Americans? privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties, which led to the creation of a comprehensive privacy protection framework that must be adhered to by all sites as they implement and participate in the NSI. [The NSI Privacy Framework](#) ^[1] includes: the development and adoption of written privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties policies; the designation of a privacy and civil liberties officer; the institution of the [ISE-SAR Functional Standard business processes](#) ^[2]; and the training of NSI personnel before sites are permitted to post or access ISE-SARs to the ISE Shared Space.

A transparent process and collaboration with advocacy groups will reinforce the ongoing commitment to earn and maintain the public trust. The [NSI Program Management Office \(PMO\)](#) ^[3] continues to build collaborative relationships with advocacy groups, particularly since these groups have served an essential role in the shaping and strengthening of the NSI Privacy Framework as well as in the development and review of foundational products, such as the revision of the ISE-SAR Functional Standard. The NSI PMO strongly encourages sites to engage members of the public, including privacy and civil liberties advocacy groups and private sector partners, in the course of development and implementation of the NSI.

The NSI has not only created a standardized process so SAR information can be shared easily across jurisdictions, but it has also led to stronger protections for the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of Americans. The ongoing success of the NSI largely depends on the ability to earn and maintain the public?s trust, so it is crucial that NSI partners continue to work together to maximize information sharing while strengthening privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections.

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Links:

- [1] http://www.ise.gov/docs/NSI_PCRCL_Analysis_July2010.pdf
- [2] http://www.ise.gov/docs/ISE-FS-200_ISE-SAR_Functional_Standard_V1_5_Issued_2009.pdf
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